

Approved For Release 2009/09/23 : CIA-RDP67B00558R000100160003-0

NSA, OSD, NSC reviews completed

PFIAB/NSC Review Completed.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Com-11

November 13, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE CHAIRMAN, UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD ✓

SUBJECT: Intelligence-Related Aspects of the  
September 18, 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident

Enclosed herewith is a report which was submitted to the President on October 14, 1964, by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board following its review of the acquisition, evaluations and reporting of intelligence and related data pertaining to the incident involving U. S. forces in the Gulf of Tonkin on September 18, 1964.

Before taking final action on the two recommendations contained in the Board's report, it is requested that the Chairman, United States Intelligence Board, submit his views on Recommendation No. 1, and that the Secretary of Defense submit his views on Recommendation No. 2.

It would be appreciated if the above requested comments could be provided to this office by December 1, 1964. Copies of the reports containing these recommendations should be furnished simultaneously to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

McGeorge Bundy

✓  
Enclosure (SC-09060/64)

cc: President's Foreign Intelligence  
Advisory Board

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THE WHITE HOUSE

SC-09060/64

WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD *COM-11*

October 14, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Intelligence-Related Aspects of  
September 18, 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident

The Board has completed a review of the intelligence-related aspects of the incident involving U. S. Naval Forces in the Gulf of Tonkin on September 18, 1964. The purpose of our review was to determine the alert warning and response capabilities of the U. S. intelligence community in developing crisis situations under circumstances such as prevailed in the Tonkin Gulf incident.

The Board's review included the following: (1) examination of all intelligence and operational messages which originated in the Tonkin Gulf area, and which were transmitted to the White House Situation Room through both intelligence-reporting and military-command channels; (2) analyses of independent, uncoordinated evaluations which were provided to the White House by some of the member agencies of the intelligence community; and (3) discussions with the Office of the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, and with intelligence officials of the Departments of State and Defense, the CIA, the National Security Agency and the Chairman of the U. S. intelligence community's inter-agency Watch Committee.

Based on this review, the Board concludes that there is a need for re-examination of the doctrine and procedures which presently govern the intelligence coverage, reporting and evaluations of crisis developments involving actual or threatened engagements of U. S. military forces in limited, tactical-warfare situations. We note that in this instance the President and other policy-making officials did not receive from our intelligence agencies collective evaluations of significant information which was being obtained from intercepts of encoded North Vietnamese Naval communications. As a consequence the White House was obliged to resort to unilateral and, at times, conflicting judgments of intelligence analysts and other officials in the several agencies concerned.

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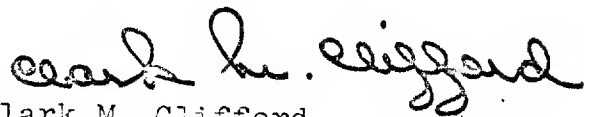
We also note that when some of the significant messages of the North Vietnamese were intercepted in the Pacific, the full encoded text was not immediately transmitted to National Security Agency (NSA) Headquarters. Thus the resources of that Headquarters could not be brought to bear fully and immediately to assist in achieving prompt and accurate decodes and translations of the intercepted messages for timely consideration by responsible officials.

As a means of strengthening the capability of the Government to obtain timely assessments of intelligence in such situations, we recommend that:

1. The Director of Central Intelligence, as Chairman of the United States Intelligence Board: (a) conduct a study of the intelligence-related responsibilities and functioning of U. S. agencies in the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and (b) submit to the President a report and recommendations on the desirability of establishing within the intelligence community a central evaluation mechanism having the specific responsibility of furnishing the President and other top officials with timely, interagency evaluations of current intelligence with respect to developing crisis situations such as the Gulf of Tonkin incident (perhaps using the intelligence community's Watch Committee and National Indications Center for this purpose); and that

2. The Director of the National Security Agency: (a) conduct a review of the signals intelligence collection and reporting aspects of the Tonkin Gulf incident, and (b) furnish the President a report and recommendations designed to insure timely transmission to National Security Agency Headquarters of the complete encoded text of intercepted messages which on preliminary analysis in the field appear to contain indications of possible hostile actions having a significant bearing on the national defense and security of the United States.

FOR THE BOARD

  
Clark M. Clifford  
Chairman

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP					
TO	NAME AND ADDRESS		DATE	INITIALS	
1	DD/S&T [redacted]		11/13	(S) P.D	
2	S&T Registry				
3					
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DDI	ACTION		DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY	
	APPROVAL		DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION	
	COMMENT		FILE	RETURN	
	CONCURRENCE		INFORMATION	SIGNATURE	
<p>Remarks: DDI should prepare reply for DCI signature in coordination internally with [redacted] DDP and D/NIPE, and externally with DIA, State &amp; NSA. Please have response in this office by 27 November.</p> <p>SUSPENSE: 27 November 1964</p> <p>cc: DDI  ✓ DD/S&amp;T [redacted]  D/NIPE  DDP  Exec. Sec. - USIB  EA/DCI &amp; EA/DDCI</p>					
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FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.				DATE	
LBKirkpatrick, Ex/DIR (noted)				17 Nov.	
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